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A Young Lion, the Lizard King, and Erotic Politician: Tracing the Roots of Jim Morrison's Mythical Image

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Abstract

In the past 45 years since his death, Jim Morrison's legacy, in the form of rebellious and antiestablishment reputation, numerous reprints of his photographs and the continued popularity of the Doors' music, has elevated the singer from a 1960s sex symbol image to the status of a pop culture icon. This paper aims to trace the roots of his now mythical image by analyzing the components which have been identified as those that initiated its creation: his attractive physical appearance and the promotional material launched to enhance it, press articles that focused on his physique, his highly sexual and unpredictable live performances, and his verbal ingenuity shown in the interviews he gave with memorable catch phrases.

Keywords

Jim Morrison, the Doors, sex symbol, image, myth

Introduction

According to Danesi (2008), a celebrities' premature or tragic death is one of the notable factors that contributes to someone becoming a pop icon (p. 112). In his lifetime, Jim Morrison was praised as a sex symbol, but it was his death at 27

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that made him a pop culture icon and granted him a mythical status. For Fournier and Jiménez (2000), Morrison can be seen as a modern hero, located in the land of myth, as he met all the qualifications for a tragic character: He was admired and envied, exalted and censored, sought for and rejected, and in the end even prosecuted (pp. 207, 209).

Since Morrison's passing in 1971, both he and the Doors have been *revived* several times. The beginning of what Margry (2008) calls the *mythologizing process* of Morrison was recorded at the end of the 70s (p. 144) first with the release of the LP *An American Prayer*[1] in 1978 and then the following year when Francis Ford Coppola used *The End* as a theme song for his film *Apocalypse Now*.

That this revival would continue in the 1980s, leading to the "the Doors [holding] near-mythical regard" (Buckley, 2003, p. 309) and to "the growing iconization of Morrison as a male sex symbol," was confirmed with the release of his first biography *No One Here Gets Out Alive* in 1980 and then again "with the September 1981 edition of Rolling Stone" (Margry, 2008, p. 144)—the now iconic front page with Morrison's photograph and the headline: "He's hot, He's sexy, He's dead."

Another 10 years after, the 20th anniversary of Morrison's death was marked by Oliver Stone's movie about the Doors. For Davis (2004), this *Hollywood's treatment* was "the defining event in the development of the Jim Morrison legend" (p. 469). Despite the controversies,[2] the movie introduced numerous of new fans to the music of the Doors.

Today, the Doors continue to sell in respectable numbers—a million albums a year as stated in the latest documentary about the group (DiCillo, 2009), their Facebook fan page has 16.9 million likes, the number of their followers on Twitter has amounted to 463,000,[3] and Morrison's grave in Père-Lachaise cemetery in Paris has been one of the city's major tourist attraction for decades. There are numerous biographies of Morrison and recollections of him are central in two autobiographical books written by his bandmates John Densmore and Ray Manzarek.

In the past 20 years, the Doors and Morrison have also become topics of the academic papers (e.g., Crenshaw, 2014; Fournier & Jiménez, 2000; Kuwahara, 1992; Magistrale, 1992; Wolfe, 1999). To some extent, Morrison's poetry has also been a subject of analysis—most notably Wallace Fowlie's book *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as a Poet*.

This continuous interest in Morrison and the Doors is tackled in many of the mentioned papers. Wolfe (1999) explains how fans, regardless of their age, are continuously drawn to Morrison "because of his expressive gifts, his risk-taking reputation, his sexuality, and his death" (p. 56); Kuwahara (1992) names as the reason for this attraction the "youthful rebellion which he epitomized and which, regardless of time periods, appeals to teenagers who rebel against authorities" (p. 55) while Magistrale (1992) notes the appeal of "his focus on the self"

in a combination with his "naked, apolitical rejection of all authority and institutions" (p. 141).

The universal and lasting appeal of the Doors' music lies in the exploration of "self-expression, darkness and release, sex and death" (Crenshaw, 2014, p. 3). These are all themes that transcend the 60s and early 70s generation and can in fact relate to any generation. They can also be seen, not just as a part the Doors' music, but as part of Morrison's timeless appeal.

Even though he is primarily a musician, Morrison's appeal is broader than just his lyrics (music) and rock star image—he is a pop culture icon. In terms of his looks, decades after his death, he is still perceived as a sex symbol, his premature and in all sense tragic death has given him the status of an immortal and an untouched symbol of youth. Beyond the symbolism of his psychical attributes Morrison's actions, his wild performances and his problems with the authorities along with the struggle for freedom of speech and expression, has made him a symbol of rebellion and opposition to the establishment. These factors, along with his verbal ingenuity, flattering press commentaries and well-used promotional material constructed a Morrison myth, one that transcends the period in which he lived. Using these identified categories (components), this paper aims to explain the creation of Morrison's mythical image.

Defining Image Components

Analyzing the reasons for the continuing popularity of the Doors first single *Break on Through*, Wolfe (1999) argues that it is Morrison's image, among other reasons, [4] that allows the song to endure. He elaborates this reasoning by using Dyer's definition of the image as "a manufactured public impression created with the help of visual images" (p. 40).

This paper analyzes the components that led to the creation of Morrison's image by using the same definition along with media text categories that define image as explained by Frontani (2007): *promotion* (which, among other, includes: press books, fashion pictures, and television appearances as well as the physical appearance of the celebrity), *publicity* (information produced by the media mainly through interviews), *work product* (musicians' recorded music, live performances, and film material), and *commentaries* (criticism; pp. 3–4).

Using some slightly modified categories listed above, the paper argues how Morrison's now mythical image has roots in the combination of several factors that helped create his image as a sex symbol but also as a rebellious and unpredictable character. They are, for the purpose of this analysis, divided into four components:

1. His attractive physical appearance and the promotional material used to enhance it—at the beginning of the Doors' career, Morrison showed an awareness regarding his attractive physique—he formed a unique and

highly sexual style that became his trademark (long hair, tight leather pants worn with no underwear), and much of the Doors promotional material (especially photographs) was used to capture and promote his attractive looks.
2. Press commentaries that largely focused on his physique—Morrison was frequently featured in teenage magazines, and many concert reviews in different magazines, apart from the music analysis, provided his detailed physical description. He was hailed by the press as a sex symbol.
3. His verbal ingenuity—in the preserved recorded interviews, it is noticeable how he spoke slowly, obviously taking its time to think about the questions and thus frequently providing interesting and witty answers that continued to be cited and form a large part of his image. Later, in some of his final interviews, Morrison admitted to have manipulated the media using catch phrases.[5]
4. His live performance reputation and repulsion towards the authority—reactions from the band's audience as they grew accustomed to theatrical performance contributed to the creation of the Doors' specific concert reputation and the public's ever growing anticipation and demand for Morrison's excessive behavior. His concert conduct, from onstage arrest in New Heaven to an incident and consequently the trial in Miami, led to the confirmation of his rebellious and antiestablishment image.

Attractive Physical Appearance and Promotional Material

Perhaps more than his bandmates, Morrison was aware of the importance of image. In his autobiographical book, John Densmore (2005) recalled how Morrison was the one who thought about their image when they started the band—regarding the way they should dress, he even considered wearing suits (p. 56). This was soon discarded—there was no talk of a uniform look as each member formed a unique style and Morrison's was the most conspicuous. In the Doors most formative years (1967 and 1968), Morrison's look consisted of leather jackets and pants. He wore his pants frequently without underwear (Davis, 2004, pp. 234, 320). His hair "all wavy and thick" (Weintraub, 1968, p. 7) as once described by a fan in a *Crawddady* review, formed an infallible part of his image and was his trademark. Even though it varied in length through his career, it remained steadily long (for male standards). Once questioned about its length, he replied: "I wear my hair long because I don't look good with short hair" (Cook, 1967). Due to "his soft curls" Manzarek (2012) compared him to Michelangelo's David and Alexander the Great (p. 98) and same did Densmore (2005, p. 36).

Long hair was a trademark of the 1960s counterculture, and its meaning in the hippie movement is explained by Saint-Jean-Paulin (1999): It was a symbol of protest (against the war and the army that imposed a very short haircut) and a

sign of belonging to a certain community. It too represented a new attitude toward women and an attempt to erase the boundaries between the sexes by a metaphorical return to childhood where no such apparent distinctions existed (pp. 42–43).

Even though the Doors were not part of the hippie culture,[6] all members had long hair, and at the beginning of his career, Morrison too sported a very hippie-like stature as a consequence of his malnutrition and use of lysergic acid diethylamide. This thin stature along with long hair could be a reason why his sexuality was described as "equally fascinating to men and women" (Kimmel & Aronson, 2004, p. 556) and the reason he was often deemed innocent, even compared to a child: "... he is the sexuality of child, the sensuosity of child only ..." (Williams, 1971, p. 55), or described like a little boy, childlike but not childish (Weintraub, 1968, p. 8).

The visual image is an important part of Morrison's mythical image, the largest portion of which came from photographs. Among both the promotional and newspaper photographs, those that stand out are the photos taken by Gloria Stavers (later used on different, numerous occasions, including the famous 1981 *Rolling Stone* cover but also by Elektra Records as promotional photographs for the band) and Joel Brodsky's session entitled *young lion*.

Stavers took many photographs of Morrison, but the most famous remains the photo shoot in her apartment—a series of photographs that feature him wearing leather pants, a black leather jacket, and her fur coat. According to Hopkins and Sugerman (2006), Morrison's appearance in *Vogue* magazine not long afterwards was also due to Stavers who sent the photos to her friend at the magazine almost immediately after she had taken them (p. 148).

Joel Brodsky's *young lion* session is a series of photographs, widely recognizable due to numerous reprints especially on posters and T-shirts. For Morrison's biographers, these are the photographs that helped define his image in a way that it became "something he felt he could never live up to" (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006).

The photos, taken the day after the photo shoot in Stavers apartment with shirtless Morrison still wearing one of her necklaces, feature him with the haircut created by celebrity stylist Jay Sebring and modeled, as Morrison had wished, on Alexander the Great (Hopkins & Sugerman, 2006, pp. 144, 148). The photographs became a "visual bonanza for Elektra" as they were frequently reprinted (Cunningham & Voso Lab, 1991, p. 67) but also for the fans that saw them as "images of the human ideal" (Margry, 2008, p. 147). As Margry (2008) pointed out, the impact of those particular photographs became so powerful over the years that it "helped shape the way in which Morrison is perceived"[7] (pp. 146–147).

Apart from the photographs, the band's promotion consisted of television appearances. In the late 1960s, 95% of all households in America owned a television set and members of the population under 20 (who amounted to 41% of the population in 1965) were the most constant television viewers (Bindas & Heineman, 1994, pp. 22, 24). In such circumstances, a television

appearance was essential for a rising band with national aspirations. The Doors earliest performances were on local television but in July 1967, they appeared on the national television show *American Bandstand* (Davis, 2004, p. 188). This performance was quite reserved; all band members appeared restrained, almost timid, even Morrison who had not yet fully defined his most famous visual and performance image. Only a couple of months later *The Ed Sullivan Show* captured a changed Morrison—shown in all his *aesthetic fulfillment* wearing leather, he emanated a violent and incendiary sexuality (Fournier & Jiménez, 2007, p. 19). This show too, was "the site of the first national Doors scandal" (Marcus, 2011, p. 87) as they decided to ignore the attempt to censor their song "Light my fire."[8] For Inglis (2006), "The Doors' dismissive response helped to cement their prestige within the counter-culture" as they were praised for their "decision to distance [themselves] from any sort of negotiation with the establishment" (p. 572).

Another important Doors' performance on American television was on *The Smothers Brothers Show* in December 1968. It was one of the last filmed shows (apart from the European tour) that featured Morrison in his prime. Davis (2004) compares his looks in leathers and long hair with "grey-eyed Achilles" noting how he "never looked that good again" (p. 299).

Press Contributions to Image

Morrison's biographers Riordan and Prochnickey (2006) regard Morrison's image makers as "media moguls who descended" on him "like celluloid vultures determined to milk his full potential as a sex symbol" (p. 164), and the result was a produced image largely based on his looks, the clothes he wore, and his often highlighted onstage sexual appeal.

Some critics saw Morrison's good looks as the band's most valuable asset, while others regarded it as a primary reason why the Doors have not been taken seriously enough. In that sense, one critic identified Morrison's sexuality as "the major reason for some heads rejecting The Doors as being a strictly teenybopper type band" adding a bitter remark how his sexuality "appears to have drawn vastly more comment than their music" (Tobler, 1970, p. 6).

Morrison's frequent appearances in teenage magazines contributed in large part to the formation of his sex symbol image. In 1967, the year that the Doors released their first album, 75% of all singles and 45% of all LPs were bought by girls age 12 to 17 years (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 165) so it was impossible to ignore such a large part of the potential audience. Morrison and the Doors appeared many times in *16 Magazine,* the biggest teen magazine in the 60s (Davis, 2004, p. 148) with a circulation of 1 million copies and additional 4 million readers (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 165). From 1958 to 1975, the magazine was edited by Gloria Stavers who, according to Marsh (1997), was "the first real pop journalist" who "basically invented rock and pop culture

journalism as we know it today'' (p. xii). Several Morrison biographers point out how important it was to receive her attention as she was extremely powerful in constructing images of male rock stars—''she asked and received a great deal of deference from the music industry'' since she was ''controlling the hearts and minds of nearly every fourteen-year old girl in America'' (Jones, 2015). Besides *16 Magazine*, Morrison too appeared in magazines like *Datebook*, even on the cover, and some articles like ''My Dream Date with Jim Morrison'' were written by Elektra's publicist Danny Fields (Davis, 2004, p. 148).

Fournier and Jiménez (2007) analyze the special kind of presentation Morrison received in such magazines: The texts were idyllic and romantic with an emphasis on his deep loneliness, typical of someone as talented and little understood as Morrison—he was pictured vulnerable, dangerous, and sensual at the same time (p. 20).

But not just teenage magazines projected him as a sex symbol. Music magazines that analyzed the Doors music frequently and in great detail described Morrison physique and clothes as well. Morrison referred to such practice with resentment when interviewed for *DownBeat*, a magazine he praised as the one that really deals with music, explaining: ''Most of the so-called music magazines cover everything but music. They are fan magazines and sensation-seekers. I have been written about in all of them . . .'' (Cuscuna, 1970, p. 13 as cited in Dawn Goldsmith, 2007, p. 39).

In *The Village Voice* in December 1967, Howard Smith wrote how Morrison, ''plastered all over the teenybop fan magazines,'' causes an animalistic response he had never seen before from different kinds of women. He identified him as the biggest male sex symbol since James Dean and Marlon Brando, explaining how his ''appeal is much more than words or music,'' adding, ''If my antenna are right he could be the biggest thing to grab the mass libido in a very long time'' (p. 14). Michael Lydon wrote in *The New York Times* in December 1968 about Morrison's self-developed *erotic style* which made him ''rock's biggest sex symbol'' (p. 74) and in another *Times*' article Morrison was described as ''a pop star with a vision . . .packed in sex'' (Aronowitz, 1967). In a review in the Seattle underground newspaper *Helix*, the Doors were called ''carnivores in a land of musical vegetarians'' while Morrison was described as ''sexual in almost psychopathic way'' (Robbins, 1967).

Apart from *Helix*, reviews about the Doors were frequent in their *hometown* underground newspaper *Los Angeles Free Press*. Dawn Goldsmith (2007) who analyzed their writings praised it in an context that they unlike many other publications including *Rolling Stone* ''chronicled [the Doors] countercultural contexts, influences, and confrontations with the main stream'' (p. 17) but concluded how they too ''exhibited interests in perpetuating perspectives of [Morrison's] images, legends, and myths'' sometimes doing it almost like fan magazines where his appearance seemed ''to matter more than the songs or performances themselves'' (pp. 33–34).

One such example was an *Los Angeles Free Press* article by Liza Williams (1971) in which she called him "a poster or . . . an idol or a picture to kiss at night under the covers, a piece of paper, a doll . . . the ultimate Barbie doll" (p. 56). She compared him to young Medici while providing a worship like description: "that throat of exquisite muscles holding the face which hardly rises in prominence from the column of throat before it is swallowed in the cherubic curls, the young prince . . ." (p. 55) In *Crawdaddy*, Kris Weintraub (1968) described Morrison's physique as otherworldly: "There isn't another face like that in the world. It's so beautiful and not even handsome in the ordinary way. I think it's because you can tell by looking at him that he IS God . . ." (p. 6).

Those articles, which almost appear as idolatry, helped construct an image of Morrison not just as sex symbol, but as a living embodiment of myth.

Image Projected Through Interviews

According to Walters (2006), Morrison himself contributed to his sex symbol image since he had "an active role in the formation of his self- and world-views" (p. 73). The fact that he was well educated—he graduated from University of California, Los Angeles with a B.S. degree in cinematography (Davis, 2004, p. 67) and extremely well read (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 35) could reasonably be linked to the verbal ingenuity visible in the interviews he gave, many of which also serve as a confirmation of his active contribution in image creation. In an interview given to Michael Lydon in *The New York Times*, while describing the bands power which, in his own words is sexual, Morrison called the Doors *erotic politicians* (2003, p. 75), the phrase that almost immediately became one of his most quotable.

Talking to Jerry Hopkins for the *Rolling Stone* in 1969, Morrison admitted his media manipulation and explained precisely what it was about:

> They [the journalists] look for catchy phrases and quotes they can use for captions, something to base an article on to give it an immediate response . . . I knew that a few key phrases is all anyone ever retains from an article. So I wanted a phrase that would stick in the mind. (Hopkins, 1969)

He addressed the same issue in a later interview:

> I was very good at manipulating publicity with a few little phrases like 'erotic politics.' Having grown up on television and mass magazines, I knew instinctively what people would catch on to. So I dropped those little jewels here and there – seemingly very innocently – of course just calling signal. (Chorush, 1970)

Morrison was well aware of the media power in creating image, the potential his words could have and as he put it "that the interview was an art form that should be prepared like any other art" (Davis, 2004, p. 153).

In fact, his first ingenious phrase was released at the very beginning of the Doors contact with the media—in Elektra Records' official biography of the band members in 1967. Such moves were frequently made by discography houses—they were used to target the profitable teen audience by stirring young girls' imaginations. While the other band members wrote only the basic personal data, then 22-year-old Morrison decided to provide the press and the audience with more material. The released biography fulfilled its purpose as it contained one of his most memorable quotes: "I am interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos, especially activity that seems to have no meaning" (Gaar, 2015, p. 33). Despite the later provided explanation that it was just one of the catch phrases, he deliberately placed to manipulate the media, the press held on, and this phrase along with *erotic politicians*, cited numerous times afterwards, contributed significantly to the construction of his image.

Live Performance Image

Writing about the music of the counterculture, Perone (2004) reflects on the "curious sort of religious aura" (p. 153) that surrounded some of the musicians of the era, naming Morrison the most notable among them. This kind of special experience the Doors provided their audience with was once described by Morrison as a "kind of secular religion" (Ferrara, 1970). As the center of the *ceremony*, Morrison was compared to an electric shaman by his bandmate Ray Manzarek (Walters, 2006, p. 73) but also by critic Richard Goldstein (1968, p. 42); very soon after they started preforming, the Doors gained the reputation for excess and a lot of people came not to for the music but for theatrical exhibition. In that sense, Hopkins and Sugerman (2006) wrote how the public expected to see Morrison "behave in a way that no one else could, or would" (p. 211) while Fournier and Jiménez marked his conduct and body language at concerts "as strong form of flirtation" that sometimes turned to sexually explicit behavior (2005, p. 3). "The Doors were intimately associated with sexuality in the minds of their audience" (Crenshaw, 2014, p. 7), and the sexual side of the Doors' concerts was too noticed and promoted by the press—they called their performances: a "sinister stage presence" (Heisler, 1968), a "ritual of psychic–sexual exorcism" (Youngblood, 1967, p. 15 as cited in Dawn Goldsmith, 2007, p. 19), "an orgy," and "mass sexual hysteria" (Thomas, 1969).

The press too competed in designing the perfect description for both Morrison and the Doors. Due to the final lyric of the song "Not to touch the Earth," Morrison was frequently dubbed the "self-proclaimed Lizard King"; Joan Didion (1979) called the Doors "missionaries of apocalyptic sex" and "the Norman Mailers of the Top Forty" (p. 21); in *Life* magazine's reportage, the Doors were called "kings of acid rock" while Morrison himself was compared to Cat Girl. The author too focused on his unpredictable nature: "... with Lilly Christine you had a good idea that the performance was going to stop short

of its promised ending-point. You don't know that with Morrison" (Powledge, 1968, p. 88).

Apart from the sexual image, the Doors concerts too served as projection of Morrison's rebellious[9] and unpredictable nature, especially on two separate occasions that resulted in his arrests. The first was a concert in New Haven, Connecticut in December 1967 where before the show, Morrison got into quarrel with a policeman who caught him backstage kissing with a female fan and did not recognize him. After some vulgar language from his part, Morrison was sprayed with a can of mace (Davis, 2004, p. 214). Still in pain at the beginning of the concert, he decided to tell the audience what had happened calling policeman "a little man in a little blue suit and a little blue cap" (Powledge, 1968, p. 93). He was arrested not long after, along with two journalists and a photographer. According to Davis (2004), the event was national news (the first arrest of rock singer onstage; p. 216), and the press writings mostly sided with Morrison. The arrest also resulted in his further alienation "from the forces of law and order"[10] (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, pp. 206, 207).

The second event was the Doors concert on March 1, 1969 in Miami after which Morrison got arrested, under, among other, accusations of "lewd and lascivious behavior in public by exposing his private parts and by simulating masturbation and oral copulation"[11] (Burks, 1969). The concert was held in an unadjusted space where promoters had sold several thousand tickets more than what had been agreed upon (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 293). Morrison arrived late and drunk, and tried to implement some of the ideas and principals of Artaud's theater of cruelty along with Living Theatre,[12] which he had attended the week before.

The Doors' and Morrison's literature cover the *infamous* concert extensively—Davis (2004) called it the worst and one of the most important concerts in rock history (p. 317) and Riordan and Prochnickey (2006) referred to it as "a sixty-five-minute incident" (p. 292). The aftermath of that *incident*, marked by completely contradictory statements by numerous eyewitnesses[13] on whether or not Morrison did expose himself on stage, left serious consequences since he was arrested, tried, and eventually convicted.[14]

The main difference between New Haven and Miami events was no press sided with Morrison in the latter case: *The Miami Herald* labeled the Doors as a dirty band (Densmore, 2005, p. 210) while *Rolling Stone* published *a warrant* for Morrison on the front page with a mocking subtitle "Uh-oh, I think I exposed myself out there" (Burks, 1969).

For Morrison, the Miami trial presented his fight for constitutional rights. As he explained—he fought for "freedom of speech and the right of anyone with a personal viewpoint to state their ideas in public . . . without legal pressure . . ." but in the end concluded how the case itself failed to receive enough national coverage and the opportunity to become "a major case, a kind of a groundbreaking case" (Fong-Torres, 1971).

Deconstruction of the Image

Among the many questions Morrison received regarding his image in the media, his answers varied from expressing satisfaction and gloating to expressing profound regret. In several interviews, he claimed that he liked the way the media addressed him, but with a certain amount of sarcasm detectable in his voice. Questioned by Richard Goldstein (1968) on how he prepared for stardom he replied ironically: "about the only thing I did was . . . I stop getting haircuts" (p. 42) and in an interview with Salli Stevenson (1970) when asked how he felt about magazine articles that called him the "Lizard King" he replied: "Oh, I liked it. I enjoyed it . . . I've always liked reptiles. I've always had a fondness for them. I mean we did evolve from reptiles . . ."

Though admitting his deliberate construction of catch phrases, Morrison denied any part in constructing his sex symbol image and addressed it to the press. When asked to comment on writings and talk about his "sex appeal to women of different ages" Morrison admitted that his reputation had helped him "out in some tight situations" and allowed him "to meet a lot of groovy ladies that otherwise probably wouldn't notice him" but denied that it was an intentional behavior by his part but rather *crazy talk* produced by the media: " . . . it's the reporters, it's the press, people like that, that create this insanity . . . that make up this stuff and then people start believing it . . ." (Smith, 1970).

Some members of the press acknowledged unfair writings towards Morrison. In *DownBeat*, Michael Cuscuna wrote of him as "a victim of sensational publicity and harassment by silly journalists" as well as of his entrapment "in the routine of success, with a public image to live up to, while his best musical and cinematic ambitions remain stifled . . ." (Davis, 2004, p. 373). The same was identified by Jerry Hopkins (1969) in *Rolling Stone* who blamed not only writers but also the public as well. He accused them of "spinning and spreading outrageous tales as regularly as the Doors have churned out hits" and concluded how those "new stories – each wilder than the last – [that] were told each week and over a period of two years" resulted in "Jim Morrison [coming] to represent the perfect Super Star – someone far larger than his work or his life."

Morrison's physical appearance started changing drastically by the end of 1968, there was evidence that he had been stuck with the public image of sex symbol along with theatrical behavior that he himself had created, and all this without the fans really understanding how he genuinely undressed his soul during this process[15] (Fournier & Jiménez, 2007, pp. 22–23). His drastic change of physical appearance—a long beard, change of clothes (he stopped wearing leather), and gained weight that almost led him to being totally unrecognizable is described by Walters (2006) as an act of a snake shedding its skin (p. 75) and the culmination of it was the Miami concert.

Roughly 6 months after that incident, journalist Salli Stevenson (1970) asked Morrison a question about his state of mind during that *infamous* concert. His answer echoed with resent over his media generated image:

> I was just fed up with the image that had been created around me . . . which I sometimes consciously, most of the time unconsciously, cooperated with. It just . . . it got too much for me to really stomach and so I just put an end to it in one glorious evening.

For Fournier and Jiménez (2007) this was an act of nihilism—in a period of just 4 years, Morrison went from proudly displaying his beautiful physical attributes at the beginning of his career to intentionally deconstructing his image during the last 2 years of his life (pp. 15–16).

Conclusion

Analyzing the circumstances that led to the creation of Morrison's mythical image, this paper has argued how it was a product of several embedded factors defined as four categories (components) only to the extent of the analysis since it was a unified combination that ultimately comprised his image. Morrison's attractive looks, captured both in photographs and on television, along with his frequent appearances in teenage magazines and his fans' reviews that bordered on the edge of worship helped create his image as a sex symbol. Besides the good looks and successfully placed promotional photographs, Morrison too contributed to his public image—his creativeness and verbal ingenuity in interviews he gave often resulted in well-selected catch phrases, and his unpredictable (stage) behavior, along with frequent arrests and clashes with authorities, formed a rebellious part of his image and certain expectations of excess from concertgoers.

Morrison showed ambivalence towards his image—it pleased him at first, as he believed it could only enhance his power and increase his influence on the people he was trying to reach (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 252) and some of his words from the beginning of the Doors' career suggest he was ready for the fame. He obviously felt he had a lot to give when he wrote what Davis (2004) calls "an artistic manifesto" in his Elektra Records official biography: "You could say that it's an accident that I'm ideally suited for the work that I am doing. It's the feeling of a bowstring being pulled back for 22 years, and suddenly being let go" (p. 154).

But as the people began attending the concerts for the show, to see the Jim Morrison they envisioned, he grew to hate his media produced image, one that was very different from the person he really was, as explained by his biographers Riordan and Prochnickey (2006): "The press saw the side of Morrison that best suited their needs" (p. 20).

As of the end of 1968 and especially from the spring of 1969, he began to actively disassemble his image, radically changing his physical appearance (Fournier & Jiménez, 2007, p. 16). The Miami incident marked the beginning of a downward trajectory for both Morrison and the Doors.

It is interesting to notice the tremendous impact this event had, as not even Morrison's tragic death at only 27 managed to revive the interest in the Doors. The true revival came almost a decade later and according to many, the 80s were the time when Morrison's legend began to form. Today, most frequently pictured at the peak of his popularity, he holds near mythical status—forever young and rebellious, he has become a true icon to worship.

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Notes

1. The LP featured Morrison reading his poetry with instrumental accompaniment provided by the rest of the Doors members.
2. According to Margry (2008), the film entitled "The Doors" was in fact a disguised Morrison's biography "based on Stone's own understanding of the central character" (p. 145).
3. The numbers are as of January 2016.
4. The other reasons stated by Wolfe (1999) are lyrics that appeal to adolescents of today and of the 1960s as well as musical elements like Morrison's vocal performances (p. 39). The importance of the song, apart from the lyrics analyzed by Wolfe, also lies in the promotional video the band shot for their first single, best described by Davis (2004): "Shot in color on a stark black set lit by club lights, the clip featured mostly Jim's face and features—the blue eyes, pillowy lips, and long hair of a beautiful new rock star" (p. 150). This performance highlighting Morrison's sex appeal could too serve as a confirmation of promotional material for the Doors in goal of promoting Morrison's sex symbol image from the beginning.
5. Analysis of these interviews is also used as an insight into his own views on his popularity.
6. Crenshaw (2014) points how historians have failed to categorize the Doors in the ways their listeners have: "Audiences and critics responded to these messages in diverse ways"; while listeners and writers often did not draw a line between the Doors and hippie culture, the band attempted to separate themselves from the San Francisco scene and psychedelic "catch phrases" (p. 3). Since the Doors idea was to "express a more intellectual appeal," and the "fault between San Francisco and Los Angeles" was indeed "perceived and articulated by the Doors" Crenshaw calls "toward the

ongoing historical reinterpretation of the counterculture'' as a ''a multifaceted complex of different, overlapping subcultures'' (p. 3).

7. In another article, Margry (2007), who analyzed visitors of Morrison's grave, points out how many fan-visitors have tattoos of him, most frequently pictured as the young lion (p. 145).
8. Before the show the Doors were asked to change the lyric that contained the word *higher* as it could be seen as a drug reference (Davis, 2004, p. 203). Censorship of this kind was usual and it had happened earlier that year with the Rolling Stones when their song ''Let's spend the night together'' was changed to ''Let's spend some time together'' (Jones, 1991, p. 76). According to Bindas and Heineman (1994), many singers and groups said yes to such demands just to appear on the show because they believed in profit rather than principle (p. 27).
9. Some of the unpredictable image of the Doors came too from a documentary *The Doors are open* made by British Granada television about their Europe tour in September 1968—it showed them as rebellious and revolutionary, a band who ''show more clearly what they're against rather than what they're for'' while Morrison, called an ''American super star,'' was described as ''a poet, prophet and politician'' who speaks ''for a generation who have spilt their dissent onto the streets of the world'' (Sheppard, 1968).
10. According to Morrison's biographer Davis (2004), he was arrested a total of 11 times (p. 381).
11. Apart for that felony charge, there were five misdemeanor charges: two counts of indecent exposure, two counts of open public profanity, and one of public drunkenness; in total six arrest warrants (Burks, 1969).
12. The Living Theatre founded in 1952 by Julian Beck and Judith Malina was famous for ''nudity, obscenity, anarchy, antiauthoritarianism, and violence'' (Davis, 2004, p. 314). According to Prochnicky and Riordan (2006), Morrison attended every one of their performances at the USC's Bovard Auditorium (p. 289).
13. The concert was covered by several professional photographers and thousands of other cameras and none had ''caught him exposed'' (Davis, 2004, p. 323). Morrison's bandmates claimed as well that he had not exposed himself on stage. Manzarek (2012) called it hypnotization or mass hallucination explaining how people saw what they wanted to see and subsequently created a myth (pp. 300–301).
14. Morrison was convicted of two misdemeanors (indecent exposure and open profanity) and sentenced to 6 months of hard labor. He was in the process of appeal when he died (Marcus, 2011, p. 191).
15. One of the crucial moments that marked Morrison's disappointment was the Doors' Forum concert in December 1968 before an audience that only wanted to hear ''Light My Fire.'' Frustrated, at one point he stopped singing and began questioning the reasons they came and finally he resignedly concluded: ''. . . we can play music all night long, but that's not what you really want, is it? You want something else, something more, something greater than you've ever seen before, right?'' (Hopkins & Sugerman, 2006, p. 215).

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